

**42<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL ICOFOM SYMPOSIUM**  
as part of the 25<sup>th</sup> Triennial ICOM General Conference  
Kyoto, Japan, 1-7 September 2019

## **THE FUTURE OF TRADITION IN MUSEOLOGY**

### **CALL FOR PUBLICATION AND PARTICIPATION**

ICOFOM is holding its symposium during the 25th Triennial ICOM General Conference with the general topic on “Museums as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Tradition” with a special focus on “The Future of Tradition in Museology”.

The papers should address the theme described on the following pages, not exceed 12 000 characters (including the reference list), and follow the guidelines (APA reference style, etc.) that can be found in three languages on our website:

<http://network.icom.museum/icofom/publications/icofom-study-series/>

All papers should be submitted to [icofomsymposium@gmail.com](mailto:icofomsymposium@gmail.com) by **15 March 2017** (inclusive).

The papers can be in any of the three official languages of ICOFOM: English, Spanish or French.

However, the working language of the symposium will be English.

#### **The Organizing committee is responsible for:**

- receiving the papers by 15 March and acknowledging their receipt before 20 March 2019,
- respecting the "double blind" requirement of review, transmitting the papers anonymously to the symposium's Selection committee that will proceed with the evaluation of all papers,
- notifying the authors about the decision of the Selection committee before 20 April 2019,
- sending the Proceedings with all the selected papers to the participants in August 2019.
- after the symposium: choosing the best papers for further elaboration and publication in the *ICOFOM Study Series*, vol. 48, in 2020. To be notified within two months after the symposium.

If you have any questions you can address them to [icofomsymposium@gmail.com](mailto:icofomsymposium@gmail.com)

**Call for publication and participation to the 42nd symposium  
“The future of tradition in museology”  
organized by ICOFOM in Kyoto in 2019**

*Theme presented by Kerstin Smeds,  
Professor of museology at the Department of Culture and Media Sciences,  
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Thirty years ago, Kenneth Hudson, the grand old figure of the European museum world, said that there are chiefly two qualities that will be demanded of museums in the future: pluralism of interest and flexibility of imagination (1987). Today, we cannot but admit that he was right. Even if the diversity of definitions of museum is bigger than ever, there is no doubt that modern museums want to live up to expectations from new groups of visitors, from shifts in cultural policy and a changing society in general. Many museums have left the traditional role of embodying merely a national collective memory and have become a kind of commentators on the present; the museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is supposed to explain the complexity of the world and what it is to be human in this world – in an historical perspective.

Museums are changing from being institutions and presenting “institutional” knowledge, to multicultural platforms for negotiations about the past and a future that would be more sustainable. I would like to use the term *process-museum*, or museum-as-process (Silverman, 2014), and change the term *taxonomy* – the classical art of classification – to *folksonomy*, a classification that includes user/visitor aggregation and distribution of knowledge. This means also that museums’ focus enlarges a bit from thing- and collection-orientation to visitor- and user-orientation.

Now, what is the role of museology in this? What is tradition in museology and where are we going from here? What do we do with the theory we have? How have we brought, and will bring, museological theory and epistemological developments into museums and their practices? Museology has, for sure, been shaped and debated over the years and decades in interaction with new practices and social experimentation in museums. We have been exploring processes of museality and musealization, the means and ways, in which a society selects, exhibits, interprets and administers the tangible and intangible products of culture, with a view to preserving them for posterity. According to Stránský (just to mention one of the founders of European museology) the task of museology is not to understand reality (e.g. the material) but rather to understand the *laws* that are steering our actions in reality, in collection, preservation, registration and use. If we break down the “traditions” of museological thoughts and concepts from the last fifty years, we end up with quite a few definitions and approaches as to what museology does, as well as what traditions it has. Here I will mention just a few perspectives. Museology has:

- *a historical-institutional perspective*, including research into the history, collections, exhibitions and artefact concepts of museums
- *a didactic perspective*, focusing on young people, life-long learning and communication
- *a communicative perspective*, with a focus on strategic communication and exhibition planning in the museum world
- *a social, economic and sociological perspective*, including research into museum economy and social impact (e.g. community museums) as well as the impact of cultural heritage policy

- *a philosophical / existential perspective*, museum as a phenomenon in modernity
- *a technological perspective*, with research into digital museology or cyber-museology

Apart from these perspectives, we have to deal with the great global diversity of "traditions" in museology, geographically and culturally as well as in schools of museological thought. Tradition could also be considered as "classical museology" confronted with critical museology, socio-museology or critical heritage studies. In what respect does there exist anything like "classical" museology, and where? Geographically there has developed a plethora of definitions of museology – one needs only to mention that the field in East and North Europe is very large and encompasses not only museums but cultural heritage at large, thus rendering new terms or concepts: *mnemosophy* or *heritology* (T. Sôla). E.g. in Sweden, there is no conflict or confrontation between museology/museums studies on the one side and/or heritage studies or critical heritage on the other.

All this is real achievement when it comes to the development of critical thinking in relation to the phenomenon and development of museums. But – for the practitioner – have we been of any help? Some say that museology has long since become too conceptual – a "philosophie du muséal" – and is no longer dealing with "real things", and that we have broken tradition with museum professionals and museum practice. That theory has left the professionals behind. This pinpoints – one more time – the old conflict between theory and practice, where some practitioners still think that museums need no theory, only classical "housekeeping skills" for museum management. So, the question is: does museology reach the museums? Do museums feel they need museology, and if, how are the theories implemented and turned into practice?

The purpose of the Kyoto symposium is to discuss the links between the past, present and future in museology and what theories we would need in the future to support a sustainable development of museums and heritage. The goal of the papers should be to challenge tradition, without abandoning it, but presenting a critical view of museological theory and museum practice, and ponder in what directions museology should be developed in the future.

The following sections of analysis can be considered in submitting papers:

1. **ICOFOM future / past roles:** how do our members see ICOFOM's theoretical development and role in the XXIst century / what are the expectations / illusions / possibilities? What is the position of museology in relation to the traditions of Museum Studies and the fast growing field of Critical Heritage Studies? Differences – similarities?
2. **Museological theory, past and present, in relation to practice** in museums, exhibitions and heritage sites. How, in what way, do museums implement or use museological theory? Is museological theory useful, and if it is, in what respect?
3. **Museological tradition versus global development and new technologies:** what role does museology play and what positions does it take in relation to the rapid changes that are taking place, on the one hand in the museum world – e.g. will cyberspace out rule other spaces and materialities – and on the other hand in the world at large in an economic and political perspective (e.g. considering the return to extreme political positions and the "war" of information and knowledge)?
4. **Notes on different forms of experimental museology;** the role of museology in social experimentation in the development of new forms of museums that challenge tradition,

or even reinterpret the concepts of traditional museums. Along what lines and where, do museums develop, for instance, into multicultural platforms for negotiations about the past and a future, thanks to New Museology/Social museology?

5. **Museology and the Anthropocene** – how can museology reduce the disastrous effect man has on our planet earth and our living conditions? How can museology help to bridge the gap between mind and matter – the gap that is the reason for the state of mankind right now – the belief that man is superior to nature and all other creatures?! It is time to leave the conceptual ideas about discourses, texts, objects as texts and narrations behind, and realize that we and the material world are one whole; we have come into being *together* with the material world, not apart from it. We are buddies with the material; we wouldn't otherwise be human; we would have achieved nothing without the help of material, tools and objects. We are all subordinated to entropy, death and extinction as well. So what impact should this insight bring to our dealing with museums, objects and collections, with a sustainable future in mind?

### References

- Hudson, K. (1987). *Museums of Influence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Silverman, R. A. (Ed.). (2014). *Museum as Process: Translating Local and Global Knowledges*. London, UK: Routledge.